

## Rock Hounding

Rock and fossil collection is allowed on public lands within the Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO) with the exception of developed recreation sites, the Garden Park Fossil Area or where otherwise prohibited and posted. ([2009 Rockhounding and Fossil Collecting brochure](#))

**Rocks, mineral specimens and semi-precious gemstones, petrified wood, and common invertebrate and plant fossils** may be collected on public lands without charge or permit in reasonable amounts as long as the specimens are for personal use and are not collected for sale or barter to commercial dealers. Collectors should note that there are some restrictions and a BLM permit may be required, depending on the amount of material you collect, how you collect it, where or when you collect, and whether the material will be used commercially.

**Vertebrate fossils** including dinosaurs, mammals, sharks, and fish, or any fossilized animal with a skeletal structure, cannot be collected without a paleontology permit. These types of permits can be obtained from the BLM paleontologist in Grand Junction and are issued only to qualified museums and educational institutions with trained staff and repositories. There are several quality paleontology organizations in the area.

**Collection and removal** cannot be aided with motorized or mechanized equipment including but not limited to: tractors, bulldozers, plows, power-shovels, semi-trailers or other heavy equipment is not authorized. Undue or unnecessary degradation of the public lands is not allowed during the removal of rocks, minerals, gemstones, or fossils.

Many of the rock and gem clubs have a [code of ethics](#) regarding the collection of rocks, minerals, and fossils which we endorse.

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## Reasonable Amounts

**Decorative Rock** - A reasonable amount is defined as small quantities of mineral material that which would fit into a standard sized wheel barrow over a one year period. Collection that leads to the construction of rock walls, homes, fireplaces, pathways, and other landscaping or home construction projects would be considered in excess of what is defined as a reasonable amount and would require a permit.

Note: The Royal Gorge Field Office currently has one rock collecting area set up for this collection of decorative rock, commonly called the [Penrose Moss Rock area](#).

**Mineral specimens** - A reasonable amount is defined as small quantities of mineral material and semi-precious gemstones for personal use which would fit into a 5 gallon container. Anything in excess of a 5 gallon container per year would require a permit.

Note: There are some specimen locations that are encumbered with un-patented mining claims and the mining claimants may exert rights under the mining law to exclude others from collecting on their claim. You can conduct on line research to determine location of un-patented mining claims.

**Petrified Wood** - Based on legislation specific to petrified wood, the maximum amount which one person can remove without charge per day is 25 pounds in weight plus one piece, with a maximum amount of 250 pounds removed in one calendar year. Pooling of quotas to obtain pieces larger than 250 pounds is not allowed.

Note: There are very few locations where petrified wood can still be found in the type of quantities discussed above. If several individuals did their full level of authorized collection, significant loss of

fossil resources will be lost. It is recommended that any collection of petrified wood be done with care and respect for these irreplaceable resources.

Common invertebrate and plant fossils (Hard or soft bodied animals without skeletal structures such as insects, crabs, clams, and snails) - A reasonable amount is defined as small quantities of mineral material that which would fit into a 5 gallon container. Anything in excess of a 5 gallon container per year would require a permit.

Note: Some invertebrate and fossil resources are considered uncommon and scientifically significant. If there is a question on whether fossils are considered uncommon or scientific contact the RGFO geologist.

For commercial use (where trade or sales are involved), a mineral material permit is needed from the BLM. General information on management of mineral materials is available.